

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2007-2008

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1 Introduction

1.1 Legislative Background

- The Childcare Act became law in July 2006 to transform the provision and delivery of Childcare and Early Years services. The Act formalises the strategic role of Local Authorities to improve outcomes for all children (Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, and Achieve Economic Well-being).¹
- Section 6 of the 2006 Act gives local authorities a new duty of securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in their area in order to enable them to work or undertake education or training leading to work.
- Section 7 gives them a related duty to secure free early years provision for pre-school children of a prescribed age.
- A detailed assessment of the sufficiency of all Early Years and Childcare provision within the Local Authority area must be completed by April 2008, reviewed at least annually, and renewed every three years.
- This report constitutes the first assessment of the extent to which parents within Bath & North East Somerset are able to access childcare to allow them to work outside the home. It attempts to identify any shortfalls regarding the availability, affordability or quality of childcare places and Early Years Education places.

1.2 What is childcare?

The Government's vision is to ensure that every child gets the best start in life, and to give parents more choice about how to balance work and family life.

By 2010, all three and four year olds will be entitled to 15 hours a week of free high quality care for 38 weeks a year. In addition there should be an out of school childcare place from the hours of 8am-6pm every weekday available for all children aged 4 to 14 who need it.²

Childcare is defined as anyone other than the child's parent/guardian looking after them when they are not at school. This assessment is concerned with childcare which enables parents to go out to work (as opposed to enabling them to attend social activities). As well as formal care provided by day nurseries and childminders this may include care by family, friends and neighbours. For older children, not yet mature enough to be left unattended, supervised activities after school and during holiday times may enable a parent to go out to work.

¹ The Childcare Act 2006, passed 11 July 2006

² The Childcare Act 2006, sections 6 - 11

The latest published national survey of parents shows the majority of them use some form childcare, the most common being a grandparent.³ Many parents use a mixture of formal and informal childcare, juggling working hours and different arrangements over different times e.g. a grandparent may look after a child during term time but the parent pays for a holiday club during the school holidays.

The main emphasis of this assessment refers to provision registered with OFSTED⁴. Not only is registered childcare the easiest to monitor, it is the only childcare for which low income parents can get significant financial help with childcare costs by claiming Childcare Tax Credits.

Different types of formal childcare are described below:⁵

Childminders

- Offer childcare based in their own home
- May care for children from birth upwards
- Can offer a flexible service including taking and collecting children from school
- If minding children under 8 years of age for longer than 2 hours must undertake training and become registered with OFSTED

Full Day Care

- Provides care and education for children from around 6 weeks of age up to school age
- Generally opening hours are from 8.00am – 6.00pm, with children able to attend full-time or part-time
- Care is normally provided all year round, a few also offer out of school provision for older children
- Must be registered with OFSTED

Sessional Day Care

- Offers sessions of care and early education during term time for children aged between 2 and 5 years
- The sessions last between 2.5 and 3.5 hours, break for lunch and run between 2 and 10 sessions a week
- May share premises with other community groups
- Must be registered with OFSTED

Out of School clubs

- Provide term-time care either before school (breakfast club) and/or after school for school age children, generally up to the age of 11
- Can provide care (full time) for five days a week during school holidays
- If caring for children under 8 years of age for longer than 2 hours must be registered with OFSTED

³ Childcare and Early years Provision: A Study of Parents' Use, Views and Experience. DfES Research Report 723. National Centre for Social Research 2006.

⁴ OFSTED regulates standards of care as well as judging early years education

⁵ for formal definitions and legal requirements see www.ofsted.gov.uk

- Are often located within or nearby a school site

In April 2007 OFSTED started a 'voluntary' register for providers offering care only to children over the age of 8, or aged under 8 only within the child's own home. This 'light touch' registration, amongst other things, permits parents to reclaim some costs via tax credits. Nannies and sports clubs at leisure centres are examples of providers listed on the voluntary register. Currently there are six nannies living in Bath and North East Somerset on the voluntary register. Childcare places provided by these nannies are not included in the report.

2 Is childcare accessible?

2.1 The need for childcare

Bath and North East Somerset enjoys a relatively high employment rate. The latest unemployment rate is 3.7% of the economically active population. This compares favourably with the average rate in England of 5.3%⁶. In addition, the percentage of claimants who have been unemployed for longer than twelve months is only 8% - well under the regional and national average.⁷

Along with high employment rates, the workforce within Bath and North East Somerset enjoys relatively high levels of formal qualifications - well above the national average and topping all the other counties and authorities in the South West.⁸

Although median pay among residents in 2006 was £24,900, the equivalent pay figure for all those working within Bath and North East Somerset was £24,000 (same as the England median) illustrating a tendency for residents to commute to other areas for higher paid work.⁹

Set against these positive employment attributes is the fact that median house prices within Bath and North East Somerset are more than 30% above the rest of England. Affordability ratios are calculated as median house prices divided by annual median workplace-based earnings. House prices in Bath and North East Somerset are 8.8 times earnings (for first time buyers in the lower quartile of both house prices and earnings this raises to 9.3 times).¹⁰ Such figures indicate that some families have little or no choice about both parents finding paid work.

Although the authority as a whole is relatively affluent, there are areas of severe deprivation. Disadvantage, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), is based on the principal of seven distinct dimensions or 'domains' of deprivation, each of which is measured separately. Two of the seven IMD domains are income and employment, each individually accounting for 22.5% of the total IMD score. Health - including life expectancy, and comparative illness & disability ratios, is another domain, as is access to housing and services. Kingsmead, Whiteway and Twerton West are within the top 15% of England ranked by IMD scores, indicating areas of severe disadvantage.¹¹

⁶ The unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the number unemployed by the number of economically active residents of working age. This data is based on a sample survey and so subject to sampling variability. Source: Office for National Statistics Local Area Labour Force data and Annual Population Survey data. April 2006 – March 2007.

⁷ Page 16, South West England Regional Economic Profile, Issue 4 Oct 2007, South West Observatory

⁸ Page 9, South West England Regional Economic Profile, Issue 4 Oct 2007, South West Observatory

⁹ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2006, GOSW Regional Intelligence Team, B&NES brief Sept 07.

¹⁰ HM Land Registry House Prices Q1-Q2 2006 / ONS Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings 2006, GOSW Regional Intelligence Team, B&NES brief Sept 07.

¹¹ The English Indices of Deprivation 2004, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Along with the rest of England, the population within Bath and North East Somerset is increasing. Nevertheless between 2002 and 2006 population estimates show the number of children (0-15) within the authority has remained fairly static at around 30,000. *Refer to Appendix 1*

In addition Primary Care Trust records show that the birth rate has been fairly static increasing only slightly. *Refer to Appendix 2.* The rate may continue to increase in the future, particularly with inward migration to the area.

Set against this static child population, high house prices and the changing political and social expectations of mothers have contributed to the increase in the demand for childcare. Nationally the percentage of all mothers in the workforce increased from 57% in 1990 to 68% in 2003. By 2003, 73% of partnered mothers with children aged between 5 and 10 were working outside the home, rising to 80% of mothers whose children were aged between 11 and 15.¹²

The largest employment sector in Bath and North East Somerset is Public Administration, Education and Health (35%). This is substantially larger than both the South West region (28%) and England as a whole (26%).¹³ Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants is the next largest sector. Many jobs in this sector are relatively low paid and require shift work.

2.2 Supply of Childcare

Bath and North East Somerset has been monitoring the number of childcare places for a number of years. Since September 2005, the overall total has remained fairly constant at approximately 5800 places. *Refer to Appendix 3.*

In December 2007 there were 368 registered providers offering a total of 5824 places. A map of the location of these providers can be found in *Appendix 4.*

The total count of childcare places hides variations between different geographical areas, types of provision and age bands. The authority has 12 current (or planned) Children's Centres within its boundary – each Centre having a distinct 'catchment' or target geographical reach for the delivery of services. A map of these 12 areas is shown in *Appendix 5.*

The Children's Centre catchment areas have been chosen to incorporate nationally defined geographical areas – Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA). The use of these permits numerous national statistics to be examined and summarised. The numbers of young children living in each

¹² UK family trends 1994-2004, Helen Barrett, National Family & Parenting Institute, 2004

¹³ ONS Annual Business Inquiry 2005, GOSW Regional Intelligence Team, B&NES brief Sept 07.

area¹⁴ and IMD measures of relative disadvantage have been used in planning the location and target reach of each Centre.

The total number of childcare places has been broken down within each of these twelve geographical areas. The ratio of childcare places to the number of children estimated to be living within each Children's Centre area is shown in Table 1:

Children's Centre Area	Number of children aged 0-4 incl	Number of children aged 5-11 incl	Number of providers	Number of childcare places	Ratio of childcare places to children
Bath Rural	809	1207	45	782	0.39
Chew Valley	808	1540	34	483	0.21
Keynsham	953	1628	44	672	0.26
Midsomer Norton	907	1370	46	601	0.26
Moorlands	936	1224	31	521	0.24
Paulton	611	856	18	191	0.13
Peasedown	721	1028	27	366	0.21
Radstock	496	649	15	262	0.23
St Martins	725	1178	30	511	0.27
Twerton	709	1010	19	260	0.15
Walcot	613	733	22	440	0.33
Weston	719	1157	37	735	0.39
B&NES total	9007	13580	368	5824	0.26

Data: numbers of children from 2001 census, providers OFSTED registered places as at December 2007.

The above table includes 120 places at registered holiday play schemes. These play schemes are provided free of charge to the parents/children and allow children to come and go as they please. Whilst these are suitable for older children, the fact that children can leave anytime and that they normally operate for less than three hours per session means they are often unsuitable for working parents to use for childcare. In the following analyses these playscheme places have been removed from the calculations.

¹⁴ The only numbers available at the LSOA level reflect those recorded in the 2001 Census.

Upon registration childminders are advised of how many children aged 0 - 8 they can care for (including their own). If a child is over 8, they may be able to be cared for by the minder without 'using' one of the childminder's registered places. To reflect this additional provision for older children, the 200 registered childminders are deemed to be able to care for one additional child over the age of 8, each offering a breakfast place, an after school place and a holiday place within their local area. The 'reworked' childcare places and ratios, after adjustments regarding the playscheme places and the additional childminder places, are as follows:

Table 2 - RELATIVE NUMBER OF CHILDCARE PLACES IN EACH CHILDREN'S CENTRE AREA

Children Centre Area	Number of children aged 0-4 incl	Number of children aged 5-11 incl	Total places after playscheme and childminder adjustments	Ratio of childcare places to children
Bath Rural	809	1207	854	0.42
Chew Valley	808	1540	537	0.23
Keynsham	953	1628	744	0.29
Midsomer Norton	907	1370	688	0.30
Moorlands	936	1224	566	0.26
Paulton	611	856	230	0.16
Peasedown	721	1028	417	0.24
Radstock	496	649	283	0.25
St Martins	725	1178	484	0.25
Twerton	709	1010	272	0.16
Walcot	613	733	467	0.35
Weston	719	1157	762	0.41
B&NES total	9007	13580	6304	0.28

Whilst the average ratio is 0.28 places per child, or one place for every four children, in some areas the ratio is much higher and in others is much lower.

Although this provision must indicate the extent to which parents currently use childcare, it does not necessarily reflect parents' ideal requirements. To judge whether the current number and location of childcare places are sufficient to meet the needs of parents, a large representative sample of parents were asked about their current childcare requirements and how well their needs were being met. In addition, childcare providers were asked about their views regarding the sustainability of their settings and their occupancy rates. Full details of the consultation are in *Appendix 6*, with the main results summarised below. Discussion about the resulting supply and demand for childcare is found later in Sections 6 and 7.

2.3 Providers' views about sufficiency

Childminders

41% of the 200 childminders responded to a questionnaire about their current practice.

The majority of respondents (62%) agreed there was sufficient childcare provision in their locality, with a significant minority (24%) disagreeing or being unsure (13%). Asked if there were *more* than enough childcare places, only 21% thought their occupancy rates may be affected by an 'over supply' of places. The majority (66%) did not agree that there were too many places (13% unsure).

Overall, most (82%) childminders were confident about their ability to sustain their business over the next 1-2 years (7% were not, 11% were unsure).

Nevertheless, given the opportunity to add additional comments to their questionnaires, seven childminder (23% of those who chose to comment) referred to difficulties filling their places, with a further seven thinking of giving up their business or having done so already (whilst remaining registered with OFSTED).

Although the childminders were registered to look after a total of 527 children (full time), large numbers of childminders preferred to mind fewer children than permitted by their OFSTED registration. When asked how many children they ideally like to mind, the total full time places were reduced to 419, indicating an average preferred working capacity of 80%.

Within this working capacity, 52% of childminders had vacancies, and 32% had waiting lists. Vacancies are difficult to quantify. If a session - defined as a week-day morning or afternoon - is vacant, then that vacancy, on its own or combined with others may or may not be useful to another parent. Nevertheless childminders, as a whole, currently had significant number of vacancies in each age group. The problem is that vacancies may not be situated in the localities in which parents experience difficulty in finding places.

Out of School

Only 26% of the Out of School clubs returned their questionnaires (19 out of 74). The majority (79%) agreed there was sufficient childcare provision in their locality, with a minority (16%) disagreeing or being unsure (5%).

Overall, most (79%) clubs were confident about their ability to sustain their business over the next 1-2 years but a minority (21%) were not. Asked if they agreed with the statement 'Parents appear to want care but are unwilling to pay for it', 5% were unsure with the rest of the responses being

split between agreeing and disagreeing. 16% had difficulties in resolving late/non-payment of fees.

Although 21% of clubs claimed that vacancies were immediately filled, most clubs had some vacancies some of the time. Again, the problem is that the vacancies may not be situated in the areas in which parents want childcare places.

Nurseries, Pre-schools

92% of the 89 groups providing early years education and daycare responded to a questionnaire about their current provision.

The majority of those (82%) agreed there was sufficient childcare provision in their locality, with a minority (13%) disagreeing or being unsure (5%). Asked if there were *more* than enough childcare places 21% thought their occupancy rates may be effected by an 'over supply' of places. The majority (67%) did not agree that there were too many places (12% unsure).

Overall, most (73%) settings were confident about their ability to sustain their business over the next 1-2 years but 27% were not or were unsure. 75% felt the current NEG funding of £8.32 per session was insufficient to ensure sustainability.

Only half the respondents thought they had the opportunity to be represented in the planning of Children's Centres with only 56% believing that the development of new childcare places takes account of existing provision. Most of the provision is provided by private, voluntary or charitable organisations and, until now, the market has only been influenced by the council to a limited extent. When planning Children's Centres, particularly those offering childcare, Bath and North East Somerset council works in partnership with local settings.

The vacancy rates were variable across settings and age groups. Although no parents in the survey said that there was absolutely no available childcare for babies, evidence from providers suggests a shortage of care for the 0 – 3 year olds: 54% of providers of 2 - 3 year old care said vacancies were either only occasionally available or filled immediately, rising to 75% in the 0 – 2 year old age range.

Again the problem is that any vacancies may not be in the neighbourhoods in which parents are experiencing difficulty in finding places. This is particularly true where parents of 3 and 4 year olds are wishing to claim their full entitlement of five sessions per week.

2.4 Parents' views about sufficiency

A total of 708 parents, representing 1355 children, replied to a questionnaire asking about their current use of childcare - informal and formal - and their satisfaction with those arrangements. The majority of parents (with the exception of the targeted hard-to-reach groups) were randomly selected and represented a good 'spread' throughout the authority – *Appendix 7* maps their home postcodes.

In the context of local government, 'hard to reach' is a term sometimes used to describe those sections of the community that are difficult to involve in public participation.¹⁵ The random nature of the parental childcare survey meant some "hard to reach" parents would be contacted, but not necessarily engaged in replying to the questions.

Thirty specific groups/organisations representing parents who may be considered 'hard to reach' in the context of collecting the data required for this report were contacted and asked for help. These groups are listed in *Appendix 8*. Face to face interviews with 'hard to reach' parents resulted in the collection of 41 completed questionnaires which are included in the results that follow.

28% of the parents were single parents, 71% two parent families and 1% had 'other' arrangements. Only 11% of the families were 'traditional' in the sense of having one partner as the full time carer and the other working full time. Another 11% were two parent families where both parents worked full time. The majority of single parents (67%) worked either part time or full time.

Overall, 64% of respondents regularly used some form of childcare. A minority (21%) did not use childcare for some or all of their children. Many parents simply preferred to look after their children themselves, with some parents expressing fairly strong views about their role:

"I wish there was less emphasis on women/mothers "returning to work" i.e. paid employment and more emphasis on the importance of mothers staying at home to support their husband in work, give a stable, calm environment for raising children without the stress of "juggling work & child care" and the ability to give time to others in the community i.e. visiting housebound, collecting prescriptions, shopping for others & giving emotional support to other mothers / fathers at home."

"I do not wish to work full time as I feel that my children will suffer. I feel that the emphasis should be on bringing up well balanced children and not trying to get everyone back to work full time. Full time mums seem to have no value on society any more and I think that full time working parents is an easy option!!!"

¹⁵ ISR Working Paper, January 2007, Nicola Brackertz

“Childhood years are vital in any person's life. I do not believe that it is either suitable or desirable for young children to have long days away from home e.g.7:30am-6:30pm. My children need time at home to relax, unwind, play with local friends and enter activities with parents. This gives them a secure emotional base. What is the point of paying somebody to look after YOUR children so parents can go out to earn money? Is it perhaps so that tax is paid by both the parent and childminder to go to government?”

Of those families using childcare, many families used more than one form of childcare. Informal childcare was central - 70% of those using childcare relied wholly or partly on family and friends. For example, one parent commented;

“I would not be able to work were it not for my parents being my sole child carers. The cost of childcare for 3 children both before and after school would therefore make it pointless in going out to work as all my wages would be gone. I feel strongly that family carers (grandparents) should be recognised as they play a large role in helping families to return to work and this is increasingly becoming the norm for a lot of young families today.”

Another comment from a parent relying on relatives was;

“Both my children are looked after by very supportive grandparents whilst we both go out to work. Without this support we would struggle to do this as there are insufficient breakfast/after school clubs and those few that do exist are very expensive. “

Notwithstanding this, 34% paid for some form of formal childcare. This appears to be less than the national average of 41% of families using formal childcare.¹⁶ The difference is due to the two reasons; different definitions of formal childcare and the fact that the national study asked about care of children up to the age of 14 whereas our local survey included children up to the age of 17 – many of whom can look after themselves.

In situations where both parents worked full time or where single parents worked full time, 83% of families used childcare. Again, the most popular form of childcare was provided by family and friends, the next after-school clubs, then childminders. The following comment typifies of the mix of care used by working parents:

“I currently work in a school with the sole reason being able to care for my children for the majority of the time. Previously I have struggled to find childcare at a reasonable cost, and have used a number of services including nursery / pre-school and sharing childcare arrangements with others in the same situation. My children are now of the age where they are able to be alone for a short time (with their grandmother living opposite). I consider myself very fortunate to have such a good support network.”

¹⁶ Childcare and Early years Provision: A Study of Parents' Use, Views and Experience. DfES Research Report 723. National Centre for Social Research 2006.

The remaining 17% of full time working parents who did not use childcare either worked around school hours, had children who were old enough to look after themselves, or were self employed childminders.

151 of the 708 parents did not use childcare for at least one of their children. Asked why not, 45% said they preferred to look after their children themselves (see above), 15% said childcare was too expensive for them to use (see later), 38% worked around school hours and 32% had children who looked after themselves. (Parents could tick different boxes for different children and hence the percentages do not sum to 100).

When asked if childcare issues had recently prevented them from starting or continuing in work 19% of parents responded that they had. The exact reason varied from family to family and often there were multiple issues but;

- 7% said cost had prevented them working (see later),
- 5% perceived childcare as unavailable or inaccessible,
- 2% stated they were unable to find alternative care if their child or the regular carer was sick and
- 1% thought that childcare hours were not long enough to enable them to work.
- Other reasons included working shifts when childcare was unavailable or having children with special needs that could not be met by the available childcare.
- Some working parents felt their jobs suffered because a lack of childcare prevented them from increasing their hours or attending additional ad-hoc training/meetings.

The 'hard to reach' parents had a similar profile to the overall sample - 32% were single parents and 68% two parent families. 17% were 'traditional' families and another 7% were two parent families with both parents working full time. In contrast with the general sample only a small number (18%) of the single parents worked part or full time.

Of the 41 respondents, 83% used some form of childcare with many relying wholly or partly on family and friends. In the hard to reach parents, 54% paid for some form of childcare which is higher than the local and national average. This may be explained by the fact that 95% had primary age or younger children compared to 78% of the total sample. In addition, the increased use of formal childcare may reflect the additional support and information given to these groups.

Parents of disabled children and children with special educational needs attending mainstream school or early years settings were contacted in the random sample. 28 disabled children were represented, along with 30 children with statements of special educational. These children lived in 38 families, 42% of which included a full time parent and 32% of which used some formal childcare. A further 24% used only family and/or friends.

These figures appear to be similar to the use of formal childcare within the Bath and North East Somerset population as a whole.

A previous survey of 50 parents of disabled children in Bath and North East Somerset found that childcare was not the most important priority for these parents. *Refer to Appendix 9.* Instead, it appeared that the parents wanted an increase in the availability of short breaks (previously referred to as respite care).

3 Is childcare affordable?

3.1 Average costs

All childcare providers are asked for their rates during the annual audit of the information held by the Family Information Service. Where this had been provided, costs were extracted and analysed. Costs may have risen since the data was collected in mid 2007. Providers' average hourly costs were calculated as follows:

Type of Childcare	% of settings represented	Average hourly cost	Min hourly cost	Max hourly cost
Breakfast Club	70%	£ 2.68	£ 0.50	£ 6.00
Childminder	83%	£ 3.75	£ 2.50	£ 5.50
Day nursery	76%	£ 3.55	£ 1.78	£ 7.00
Extended Day Play Group	100%	£ 4.50	£ 2.00	£ 8.50
Nursery Units of Independent Schools	75%	£ 5.79	£ 5.00	£ 7.36
Pre-School Playgroup	46%	£ 2.85	£ 1.25	£ 6.00
Registered After School Club	66%	£ 3.33	£ 2.18	£ 7.00
Registered Holiday Club	25%	£ 3.72	£ 1.80	£ 7.10

Note – these are average rates over all hourly rates for different age ranges and different times. To ensure a larger sample of breakfast and after school clubs are represented in this data, hourly rates have been calculated from sessional rates

There is an exceptionally large range of costs in every type of childcare provider. It is interesting to note that the Nursery Education Grant is currently £8.32 per session, i.e. £3.33 per hour, and for some providers this will be less than the income received for children attending without the NEG funding.

3.2 Helping parents with costs

Employers

It was recommended that Local Authorities consult with employers regarding childcare issues to establish if these are barriers to employing staff. However engaging employers in discussion regarding childcare has proved difficult. Refer to Appendix 10. The Early Years and Extended Services Team complaint records contain no comments from employers about a lack of childcare preventing recruitment or retention of staff within Bath and North East Somerset. Whether this indicates employees' success at managing childcare commitments or employers lack of interest in addressing them is unclear.

Bath and North East Somerset council is fortunate that a number of the major employers in the area for example the M.O.D., both Universities, and

both Higher Education Colleges have childcare provided either by themselves or by a third party on, or very close to, their premises.

In addition many employers are now providing their employees with access to Childcare Voucher Schemes. Such schemes allow employees to swap untaxed income for money to spend on OFSTED registered childcare. A maximum of £243 per month can be exchanged and the employee pays no income tax and national insurance on that money. In addition the employer saves on employer's national insurance contributions.

As one of the larger employers, Bath and North East Somerset Council provides a voucher scheme for their employees and administers the scheme for other local employers in the public and charitable sectors.

The tax credit system

Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Working Tax Credit (WTC) were introduced in April 2003 and replaced Working Families' Tax Credit, Disabled Person's Tax Credit and Children's Tax Credit, as well as some other forms of financial support for families with children. The aims of the tax credits were set out in the 2002 Budget, and included:

- supporting families with children, recognising the responsibilities that come with parenthood;
- tackling child poverty, by offering the greatest help to those most in need, such as low-income families;
- helping to make sure that work pays more than welfare and that people have incentives to move up the earnings ladder.

Obviously, in order to meet these objectives, the financial support available through the tax credit system must be taken up by those eligible for support.

The following table shows the different take up of WTC and CTC in different geographical areas (Children's Centre areas). Unemployed families receiving the equivalent of Child Tax Credits via their other benefits are included.

Table 4 - FAMILIES RECEIVING CHILD TAX CREDIT, WORKING TAX CREDIT and CHILDCARE ELEMENT for Tax Year 05-06								
Children's Centre Area	Families receiving Child Benefit	Families receiving CTC	in work, all families With CTC and WTC	in work, all families with CTC above family element	in work, all families CTC family element and below	in work, all families Total	in work, all families Benefiting from childcare element	out of work All families
Bath Rural Total	1760	1085	265	150	520	915	80	170
Chew Valley Total	1860	1085	240	145	570	970	50	115
Keynsham Total	2215	1670	325	190	900	1415	55	250
Moorlands Total	1730	1250	295	180	595	1070	90	185
MSN Total	1810	1545	310	235	855	1400	80	160
Paulton Total	1190	920	160	130	515	815	30	105
Peasedown Total	1340	940	230	120	475	810	60	130
Radstock Total	930	825	195	110	350	665	25	160
St Martins Total	1570	1145	290	160	415	865	50	260
Twerton Total	1255	1145	360	155	225	750	75	395
Walcot Total	1165	725	235	75	200	500	65	235
Weston Total	1530	955	225	95	475	795	60	155
Grand Total	18355	13290	3130	1745	6095	10970	720	2320

Source: Inland Revenue, (experimental statistics)

As illustrated in the table above, the government's attempts to help low income families afford childcare have had a fairly limited impact within Bath and North East Somerset. The above figures show that only 6.5% of all working parents within Bath and North East Somerset claiming the Child Tax Credit also receive help with their childcare costs. This is less than the national average of 8.0%. In addition, the percentage getting financial support for childcare may be skewed by the fact that the highest income families are not entitled to receive any Child Tax Credit and that some families who may be entitled choose not to apply. Recent bad press regarding errors by the Inland Revenue has disinclined some parents from applying. A more illuminating statistic may be that amongst all Bath and North East Somerset families receiving Child Benefit only 4% receive childcare tax credits.

Even among families in receipt of both Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, the proportion of families receiving some help with childcare costs is only 23% (this is the same as the national proportion). Unsurprisingly, of those parents who do receive help with childcare costs, 60% are lone parents:

Table 5 - FAMILIES RECEIVING CHILD TAX CREDIT, WORKING TAX CREDIT and CHILDCARE ELEMENT for Tax Year 05-06

Children's Centre Area	Families receiving Child Benefit	Families receiving CTC	in work, all families With CTC and WTC	in work, all families Total	in work, all families Benefiting from childcare element	in work, lone parents Total	in work, lone parents Benefiting from childcare element	out of work All families	out of work Lone Parents	out of work Couples
Bath Rural Total	1760	1085	265	915	80	180	45	170	120	35
Chew Valley Total	1860	1085	240	970	50	150	20	115	75	35
Keynsham Total	2215	1670	325	1415	55	265	40	250	180	50
Moorlands Total	1730	1250	295	1070	90	230	50	185	120	45
MSN Total	1810	1545	310	1400	80	215	50	160	110	50
Paulton Total	1190	920	160	815	30	110	15	105	80	25
Peasedown Total	1340	940	230	810	60	145	35	130	85	40
Radstock Total	930	825	195	665	25	135	20	160	115	30
St Martins Total	1570	1145	290	865	50	200	20	260	210	30
Twerton Total	1255	1145	360	750	75	210	40	395	300	65
Walcot Total	1165	725	235	500	65	175	50	235	175	40
Weston Total	1530	955	225	795	60	190	40	155	125	20
Grand Total	18355	13290	3130	10970	720	2205	425	2320	1695	465

Notwithstanding the small number of families who get help, for individual families the benefit is substantial – entitled parents receive up to 80% of their childcare costs. In 2005-06 the national average help with childcare costs was £48 per week.

3.3 Parents' views about affordability

As stated above, when parents were asked why they did not use childcare for some or all of their children, 22% said childcare was too expensive for them to use and of the 208 parents who made additional comments, 51% complained about the high cost of childcare. For example:

“It costs me over £300 a term to be able to work - a huge strain on finances.”

“How can mothers with 2 children be expected to go back to work? My childcare costs £73 a day. After taking tax and NI out, this childcare cost is above the average wage..... I only cope as I have my mother nearby who looks after my child for 1 day and an understanding boss who is flexible about when and how I do my 4 days.”

“It is only because we have one child that we can afford to pay for childcare (e.g. of expense £9.50 per session for after school club which covers 1.5 hours care). Christmas is a challenge as all holiday clubs are closed and as I work in retail, I am unable to take holidays - we have to rely on friends”

“I have worked incredibly hard to be financially independent and receive no childcare support from any source - we are encouraged to work by government but to have to burden costs alone seems very unfair.”

Seven of the parents claimed the cost of childcare was the main reason for not starting or continuing in work. Comments included;

“My partner works away from home much of the time and we have no family locally. I would love to work part-time but in a professional capacity as lower paid work (most part-time appointments) pay insufficient to cover childcare costs in the school holidays. There are very few opportunities to return as part-time professional”.

“Would like to return to work, but after deducting childcare costs I would be lucky if I would bring home £1.90 per hour. Not worth all the hassle.”

“By the time I have paid for childcare for 2 children, including school holidays and paid for transport/parking into Bristol I would earn very little so not able to return to work even though I want to very much.”

In spite of this, of the 34% who *did* pay for childcare, only 9% of those were dissatisfied with the fees they were actually paying. One hypothesis might be that childcare costs are a consideration *amongst other things* when choosing if, where and for how long parents work.

4 Is childcare of good quality?

4.1 Maintaining & improving quality

The Early Years and Extended Services team includes employees who are specifically tasked to maintain and improve the quality of the Early Years Education and Childcare on offer throughout the authority.

There are 11.7 full time equivalent (FTE) employees to support all registered providers and those people thinking of, or going through the process of, becoming registered. Currently 5.2 FTEs are qualified teachers focusing particularly on the quality of the Early Years Education, 4.5 FTEs focus on pre-school childcare and childminders and 1 FTEs support Out of School clubs.

In addition to all the support and guidance offered by Bath and North East Somerset staff the council funds other voluntary and statutory agencies to provide specialised support.

Providers' staff are given many opportunities to continue their professional development:

- A large number of relevant, free (or relatively inexpensive) courses are offered to all practitioners each year. Last year (06-07) there were 185 courses attended by 3663 practitioners.
- Advice and funding opportunities are available to individuals wanting to gain additional qualifications. There are currently 153 practitioners studying for a qualification whilst having their fees subsidised. 49% of integrated day care settings have a Qualified Teacher or Early Years Professional leading practice in the setting.
- All providers are encouraged to take part in Quality Assurance Schemes for which some funding is available:
 - 17 group settings currently have Quality Assurance awards whilst another 29 are undertaking accreditation.
 - 28 childminders are part of a 'Children come First', quality assured network.
 - 22 settings have a Children's Society's 'Children and Young People's Rights Charter' reflecting the fact that children's choices are listened to.
- All practitioners are encouraged to engage in reflective practice. In addition, around 25 settings are actively participating in three action research projects.

4.2 Evidence of quality

4.2.1 OFSTED's views

There have been 228 OFSTED Childcare inspections between 01 April 2005 and 30 September 2007 in Bath and North East Somerset.¹⁷ The results are broadly in line with the rest of England:

In Childcare inspection reports, OFSTED makes an overall judgement about the quality of the childcare provision in meeting the Every Child Matters Outcomes¹⁸. This judgement is on a four point scale - Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory and Inadequate. The 228 recent childcare inspections concluded that 0.4% were inadequate, 44.7% were satisfactory, 54.4% good and 0.4% outstanding.

Sixty providers also had Nursery Education inspection reports; OFSTED makes an overall judgement about the quality of nursery education provision for 3 & 4 year olds in promoting the Early Learning Goals. This is also on a four point grading scale – Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory and Inadequate. The 60 recent Nursery Education inspections concluded that 0% were inadequate, 46.7% was satisfactory, 51.7% good and 1.7% outstanding.

4.2.2 Parents' views about quality

Those parents who paid for childcare were asked how satisfied they were with various attributes of their child's care - rating each aspect from 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent). The table below shows that parents are more than satisfied with all their types of childcare. Even for 'cost/fees', one of the more contentious issues, the average satisfaction rate was higher than 2 (satisfactory).

¹⁷ OFSTED Local Authority Early Years Profile, Bath & NE Somerset position as at 30 Sept, published Nov 2007

¹⁸ Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution and Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Table 6 - Parents' satisfaction scores by childcare types

Type of childcare	Average rating						AVERAGE
	Number of responses	Location	Opening Hours	Cost / Fees	Staff / carer	Reliability	
Creche	16	3.7	3.1	2.9	3.7	3.7	3.4
Childminder	43	3.5	3.5	2.9	3.7	3.6	3.4
Nanny/au pair	7	3.7	3.9	2.7	3.5	3.9	3.5
Pre-school, PG, Nursery	123	3.4	3.2	2.7	3.5	3.7	3.3
School Activities	24	3.8	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.5
Breakfast club	20	3.6	3.1	2.7	3.4	3.3	3.2
After school club	61	3.3	3.2	2.8	3.2	3.5	3.2
Holiday Club	79	3.1	3.2	2.7	3.4	3.5	3.2
AVERAGE		3.5	3.3	2.8	3.5	3.6	3.3

4.2.3 Children's views about quality

The consultation with children and young people undertaken for the Sufficiency Assessment looked at the *quality* of some of the childcare provision currently available in Bath and North East Somerset. 20% of all registered breakfast & after school clubs and 20% of all holiday play-schemes across the authority were randomly selected to take part in the consultation. A member of staff from the Early Years and Extended Services team known to the settings carried out the consultation.

On the day of the consultation, 20% of the children and young people attending the club/play-scheme were approached to ascertain their views. It was specified that a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 children/young people should take part. The children were all aged between 5 and 16 years and, as far as possible within each setting, there was a reasonable spread of age and gender. The consultation was anonymous.

The children were asked about the staff, the venue and the activities / resources available. The consultation was informal and used a 'Wish Tree' format, which provides children and young people with the opportunity to say what they liked about their setting, and if there was anything that they would change. Their comments were written on paper 'leaves' to stick on the Wish Tree.

On the whole the comments were positive. Examples follow:

Liked about the staff;

- They (the staff) are funny and strict
- When you're on your own, they comfort you if you're sad.
- I like the food they do
- They always find things for us to do. Its always exciting

Would change about the staff

- Some things aimed at young children. Want more for older children.
- Play more games
- Do nicer food, have more choices
- Less shouting

Liked about the venue;

- Nice outside play bit
- Plenty of space not just one room. Lots of outdoor space. You can finish games you started at break time.
- Lots of space to play with toys, cosy, not crowded, nice desk to do my home work

Would change about the venue;

- The room is very small it would be nice to have a bigger room.
- Put a wall as high as you can so my ball doesn't go over the fence, because the neighbours pinch ours.
- Don't like the bright colours in the room

Liked about the activities

- Dressing up
- Nintendo Wii (lots of happiness about this new resource)
- Get to play water games
- Cooking snacks
- Woodwork because its different

Would change about the activities

- Water slide
- Water pistols
- Have a chocolate fountain.
- Not to have painting out all the time
- More up-to-date computers

5 Perceived, actual and potential gaps in Childcare Places

5.1 Childcare in general

The number of registered childcare places in Bath and North East Somerset has remained fairly constant over the last two years. Set against the decreasing number of children is the increasing use of childcare: A national survey of families' use of childcare and/or early years provision showed a marked increase in the use of both formal and informal childcare between 2001 and 2004.

The largest part of the increase in formal care was explained by the increase in funded early year sessions for 3 and 4 year olds. Proportional rises of other types of formal childcare are highest among

- couple families compared to lone parent families,
- higher income compared to lower income families and
- more affluent areas compared to more deprived areas.¹⁹

Informal childcare plays a key role within many families, particularly for lower income families. It is chosen not only because it is a cheaper option than formal care but because parents inherently trust the carers and can more easily make flexible arrangements. Informal childcare may be particularly important for lone parents who do not have the same opportunities as couple parents to share/alternate the care.

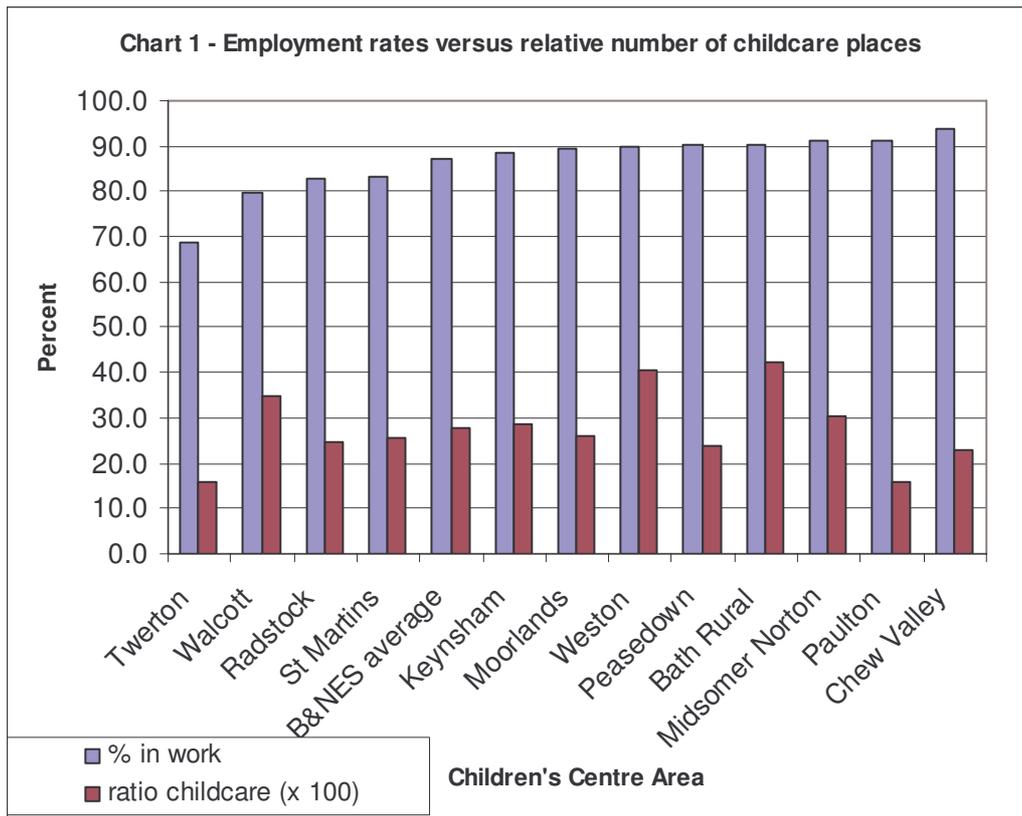
Our local parental survey endorsed the finding that higher income families used more formal childcare than lower income families and that couple families used more formal childcare than lone parents. *Appendix 11*

Hence one way of estimating the demand for formal childcare is to consider the number of families who are in work. Not only do these families frequently need childcare, but they are also likely to be higher income families. One strategy may be to ensure areas within which higher income working families live have sufficient childcare.

Table 4, which uses the latest Inland Revenue figures capable of being analysed below authority level, (05-06 tax year), shows the number of families claiming unemployment benefits within each Children's Centre area. Employment rates can be estimated by comparing the number of workless families with the total number of families claiming child benefit. The employment rates range from 68% in Twerton to 94% in Chew Valley.

Chart 1 shows the percentage of families in work compared with the relative number of childcare places within each Children's Centre area:

¹⁹ Childcare and Early years Provision: A Study of Parents' Use, Views and Experience. DfES Research Report 723. National Centre for Social Research 2006.



From the chart it is clear that Paulton, Peasedown, Chew Valley and Moorlands have higher than Bath and North East Somerset average employment rates and less than average childcare places. As a consequence parents in these areas may experience difficulty in securing sufficient childcare, particularly in the Chew Valley area which has the highest employment rate among families.

Of the 708 respondents to the parental questionnaire, 39 parents claimed there was no available childcare in their area. Difficulties in finding childcare are not necessarily due to the fact that places are unavailable. Parents are not always aware of all the options that may be useful to them in securing childcare. This information, and help in finding childcare, is provided by the Family Information Service (see next section). In addition parents may consider places as unavailable purely on the grounds of them being too expensive. Of the 39 parents claiming no childcare availability, 17 also stated that it was too expensive, leaving 22 who cannot find childcare at all.

Appendix 12 shows a map of the home postcodes of those 22 parents claiming childcare was unavailable (with no additional comment that it was too expensive). The majority (82%) of the parents were finding difficulties accessing childcare for children of primary school age. It is difficult to judge the validity of these perceived shortages without knowing which specific school the children attend but 60% of these claims may well be justified.

Such shortages appear to offer no support to the suggestion that parents in Paulton, Peasedown, Chew Valley and Moorlands may find it more difficult to secure childcare than parents in other areas.

Rather than look at potential shortages for all families *in employment*, a more useful approach may be to ensure there is sufficient childcare in areas where there is *more* unemployment, particularly among single parents.

In April 2006 there were 3505 children dependent on workless benefits. (Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Invalidity Benefit etc)²⁰. If the main driver for securing sufficient childcare is to support the aim of decreasing the number of children living in workless houses, then there is an argument for increasing the number of places in areas of high unemployment and relatively low numbers of childcare places e.g. Twerton.

Nevertheless, this strategy has contra-indications. There is national and local evidence to suggest that while some single parents prefer not to work, others find themselves caught in a benefit 'trap': Those single parents able to earn only relatively low incomes, may find it is more lucrative to remain on benefits than to return to work.²¹

A local Out of School development worker reflecting on conversations with single parents at a group based in Twerton found some evidence to support this. She reports;

"A couple of parents stressed they did not want to work and had no need or desire to work. One stating (she was) financially secure enough to stay home, another stating that she wants to bring up her own children and what was wrong with that?"

"I did ... feel that for these parents the issue and need for childcare was not paramount. I discussed how this may change in the future and become more of a need as their younger children enter school, but I did not receive any indication of future ambitions to train or enter into training."

A neighbourhood nursery, built in a previous Local Sure Start area, has had difficulty sustaining its provision. Only by caring for children 'outside' its original catchment area does the nursery remain sustainable.

5.2 Lack of information about childcare.

Parents were asked if they were aware of the Family Information Service (FIS). Overall, 34% of parents were aware of FIS, with 6% having used the service. The parents of pre-school children were more informed – 45% of those were aware of, and 11% had used, FIS.

²⁰ B&NES JobCentrePlus supplied these figures from the Dept of Work & Pensions in Aug 2007.

²¹ Benefits and Wages OECD Indicators, OECD 2007.

Of the 134 parents who said childcare issues had stopped them working or had compromised their job, 40% were aware of FIS and 8% had actually used the service. The low utilisation of the Family Information Service results in it being difficult to gauge the extent to which perceived shortages accurately reflect actual shortages.

5.3 Disabled Children

The local results of parents of disabled children anticipated evidence from the national 'Aiming High for Disabled Children' review which found that short breaks are seen as the highest priority service for families with disabled children.

In January 2008 the government announced a major funding investment which "will provide many more disabled children with enjoyable and valuable experiences away from their parents and carers. In turn parents and carers will have the well earned chance to take a break from caring.....Short breaks have a vital role to play in this and we are now looking to local authorities and Primary Care Trusts to deliver a step change in short break provision."²²

Bath & North East Somerset has been awarded £40,000 next year (2008-09), £185,100 for 2009-10 and £543,600 in 2010-11 to provide such provision.

In addition to this funding for local authorities, the Department of Health has also provided significant funding to Primary Care Trusts to improve services for disabled children with complex health needs and those with life limiting conditions which require palliative care, over the same period and has identified short break services as a local priority for NHS services from 2008.

5.4 Older Children

47% (336) of the families responding to the questionnaire included at least one child of secondary school age. Only 4% of these families used term time formal childcare (childminder, nanny, breakfast and after school clubs), with a further 7% using holiday clubs. The majority of the care was informal and provided by family and friends (37%). 33% of the parents thought the children were old enough to look after themselves.

Nevertheless 53 (16%) did not use childcare because it was too expensive. A further 13 parents said childcare was unavailable and 11 could not access any that was provided.

²² DCSF Press Notice, 14 January 2008, TRANSFORMING SHORT BREAKS FOR FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

In addition, parents' additional comments suggested a lack of positive activities for older children in the school holidays:

"As my daughter goes to Secondary school I continue to be concerned about lack of youth provision in this area. There are NO youth clubs in the area and no facilities for youths outside school other than hanging around Moorland Road."

"Holiday activities for 14 years and over very limited - in fact all clubs only seem to go 12 years & under"

"We could do with local holiday activities full or 1/2 day with a 10-14 years interest, at a reasonable price. This would also keep kids off the streets and they could develop new skills/sports."

Bath and North East Somerset council funds some 'free' access play schemes during the school holidays and subsidises Play Rangers who frequent parks to facilitate outdoor play all year round. Whilst children are free to come and go from these sessions, many parents appreciate the opportunity for their children to attend. For mature children, this type of provision may provide sufficient childcare for some parents. One parent commented:

"Thumbs up to BAPP & Bath City Farm for providing free activities. When I worked full-time, I relied on sports clubs in holidays, but these rarely cover a 9-5:30 working day. Now I have reduced my hours, I can't afford these private clubs, so use BAPP etc more."

"During the summer my 13 year old son took part in SOFA project, this was a valuable provision which I hope carries on, due to it being free which was great."

This local concern about activities for older children is a reflection of national concerns. One influential report, states:

"..most parents now work, and there have been substantial improvements in childcare provision, especially for younger children. The current Government approach combines the expectation that family life will continue with parental employment, and the drive to tackle child poverty. On the one hand extending maternity leave and nursery provision; on the other, a greater emphasis on 'welfare to work', which will take another stride forward next year that will require lone parents to seek work when their youngest child is over 12.

But this sits against the backdrop of rising concern over the welfare of older children and teenagers; the alarming shortfall in provision for this age group could have serious implications for these policies. Evidence from abroad confirms that if good quality, reliable out of school activities are not available as part of welfare to work strategies, young people can be damaged by the experience. The positive case is also being made for these activities enhancing young people's well-being, whilst also offering parents the chance to work." ²³

²³ Karen Buck MP, Still Home Alone, published in association with 4Children

Many older children may not want to be associated with 'childcare' and parents are often less satisfied about the quality of provision for older children compared with that for younger.²⁴

.....the reality of support for parents once their children reach secondary school remains very patchy with low numbers of schemes, an information deficit and low parental expectation which has not succeeded in stimulating the market so far.”²⁵

The Government has set a target for all schools to offer extended services by 2010. The core offer of extended services includes access to childcare and a wide range of out of school/after school activities. For primary schools this means that children have access to a varied menu of play activities and study support combined with childcare from 8am – 6pm for 48 weeks a year. Schools provide, or work in partnership with local providers to 'signpost' parents to, local provision. For secondary schools pupils should have access to a varied menu of study support activities which also offer them a safe place to be from 8am to 6pm during the term time and more flexibly during the school holidays. This recognises that older children may not require formal childcare but should have access to positive activities in their local area.

47% (37 schools) of all schools in Bath and North East Somerset make a full offer of extended services. 77% of schools make an offer of accessible childcare either on site or signpost families to local providers, including clubs and childminders. All secondary schools in Bath and North East Somerset offer a wide and extensive range of after school activities. Many schools allow pupils to access buildings both before and after school during term times. Holiday activities are offered in some schools although the majority of secondary schools signpost pupils to local activities offered through youth clubs, sports and leisure clubs and other providers. Information on holiday and after school activities for older children is available from the Family Information Service and from 1BigData Base (www.1bigdatabase.org.uk)

²⁴ 44% of parents of older children rated provision as 'good or very good' compared to 65% of those with children under 4, Childcare and Early years Provision: A Study of Parents' Use, Views and Experience. DfES Research Report 723. National Centre for Social Research 2006.

²⁵ Karen Buck MP, Still Home Alone, published in association with 4Children

6 Early Education places

6.1 Number of 3-4 year olds

All children become eligible for the Nursery Education Grant (NEG) at the start of the term *after* their third birthday. (Allocation and administrative 'terms' reflect the traditional academic periods of September – December, January – March and April – July). At the moment the grant funds the child to attend a maximum of five 2.5 hour sessions of education per week for 38 weeks per year, and may be split, pro-rata, over more than one setting. Children are entitled to continue to receive NEG until compulsory school age - the term after which they turn five.

Most 4 years olds within Bath and North East Somerset start at their local primary school in the term after they turn four. (Children in reception classes at independent schools are funded for additional terms until they reach statutory school age.) Hence, within Bath and North East Somerset there are many more 3 year olds receiving NEG than 4 year olds.

Some 3 year olds attend nursery classes at their local primary school – nine primary schools in Bath and North East Somerset have nursery classes, two of which are part of an integrated Children's Centre. There are twelve childminders who are accredited to receive the NEG for any eligible children in their care. However the majority of 3 year olds attend voluntary or private sector early education providers. Many of them combine these sessions with additional hours at day nurseries or childminders. All voluntary and private settings are paid the NEG directly, every term, according to how many sessions each child attends.

2001 Census figures, 2006 Mid-Year Estimates²⁶ and Primary Care Trust figures suggest that the total number of 0 and 4 year olds (inclusive) lies between 8500 and 9007.

The most up-to-date figures are the 2006 Mid-Year Estimates, which estimate there are 1686 three year olds and 1760 four year olds resident in Bath and North East Somerset.

6.2 Early Education places for 3 & 4 year old

Registers of where children are attending at the beginning of the 2007 Autumn term - the term in which most 4 year olds have just started school and only 3 year olds are claiming the grant - indicate how many eligible children are receiving early education.

²⁶ The Office for National Statistics compiles annual (mid-year) population estimates for England and Wales based on the latest Census of Population, with allowance for under-enumeration, and updated to reflect subsequent births, deaths, migration and ageing.

In the Autumn term 1651 children attended maintained reception classes and a further 93 children were funded in the reception year at independent schools. Comparing these figures with the Mid-Year Estimate, suggests 99% of 4 year olds are being funded by Bath and North East Somerset.

A further 1392 children, not yet turned 4, were receiving NEG for one or more 2.5 hour sessions. In addition there were 256 children registered at the nursery classes of maintained schools, suggesting 98% of 3 year olds are being funded by Bath and North East Somerset either via NEG or the school allocation fund.

All 4 year olds in reception classes receive 10 sessions (*more* than the statutory 5) of early education. All pre-schoolers attending maintained nursery classes attend for 5 sessions each week. An analysis of the NEG payments made to providers in the 2007 Autumn term, indicated only 57% of the 3 year old funded pre-schoolers were attending for 5 sessions, with a further 20% attending 4 sessions. Some parents choose not to use their child's full 5 session entitlement, and some children increase the number of sessions they attend as they become older. A few providers are restricted to offering only 4 sessions per week because their premises e.g. village hall, are used by other members of the community. Nevertheless the authority has a duty to provide sufficient capacity for all children to attend 5 sessions if they so wish.

The number of 3 year olds entitled to receive NEG increases throughout the academic year. Although some children turn 4, because there is normally only one intake into reception classes each year, the number of required NEG places increases during the academic year, maximising in the summer term.

Estimating the maximum number of 3 & 4 year olds requiring a nursery education place has been calculated using the following formula:

number of 3 + 4 year olds eligible for NEG funding during the summer term
= 2/5 of 0-4 year olds (census 2001)²⁷ x 5/6.

Using this formula, the *maximum* number of children eligible to receive NEG in the 2007 academic year is 3002.

The total number of '5 session' places within all the providers was calculated using both their opening hours and the number of registered places for 3 and 4 year olds. These places were then compared with the estimated number of children eligible to attend. The results, broken down into Children's Centre reach areas, appear in table 7:

²⁷ Although the 2001 census figures for children are the oldest (and the highest), they do permit an estimate of the geographical spread of children within the authority. For this reason they are the ones used here.

Table 7 - Ratio of NEG places to number of 3 - 4 year old children within Children's Centre areas				
Children Centre Area	Number of 0-4 year old children	Estimate of the eligible 3 and 4 year olds	NEG places (Dec 07)	Ratio NEG places / 3&4 year olds
Bath Rural	809	270	355	1.32
Chew Valley	808	269	276	1.02
Keynsham	953	318	393	1.24
Midsomer Norton	907	302	359	1.19
Moorlands	936	312	267	0.86
Paulton	611	204	152	0.75
Peasedown	721	240	275	1.14
Radstock	496	165	121	0.73
St Martins	725	242	274	1.13
Twerton	709	236	176	0.74
Walcot	613	204	201	0.98
Weston	719	240	410	1.71
B&NES total	9007	3002	3259	1.09
Data;- numbers of children from 2001 census, NEG providers (5 session) places as at December 2007.				

Hence using the 2001 census estimated requirement of 3002 places (n.b. Mid Year 2006 Estimates are lower at 2872), there appears to be sufficient places within the authority for all eligible children. Nevertheless data from the table above suggests there may be shortages and/or surpluses within local areas.

6.3 Parents' views about Nursery Education

141 of the 708 responding parents had children aged 3-4. Of these, 133 (94%) had a child attending funded early education sessions. (Note that only 100 parents said they were aware of NEG).

When asked for the main reason for using childcare (including pre-school), 50% of parents said they did so to enable them to work/study or train and a further 28% sent their child for the sole purpose of developing social and learning skills (21% did not give a reason).

Parents were also asked how many of the maximum 5 sessions their child attended: 68% were attending the full 5 sessions. This is higher than the 57% found in the Autumn term because, as stated above, some children increase the number of sessions they attend as they become older, and

the parental responses were reflecting attendance during the previous Summer term.

When asked why their child was not attending 5 sessions, 24% were choosing to attend less than 5 sessions and 8% (10) claimed they were unable to access their full entitlement. Of those parents unable to access 5 sessions, 6 gave valid post codes within Bath and North East Somerset.

On further investigation about the NEG provision within their local postcode area, 2 appear to have sufficient places within the vicinity. The difficulty in securing five sessions was probably due to either a strong preference for one provider or a lack of information about alternatives. A further 4, at Salford, Batheaston, Weston and Clandown, may accurately reflect a shortage of places eligible for NEG.

Some of the postcodes that have local shortages are in areas that do not appear to show shortages in table 7. For example Weston's Children's Centre area has the highest ratio (1.71) of NEG places to number of 3 & 4 year olds, yet some parents living within this area have difficulty in securing a '5 session' place for their child. This indicates that there can be shortages of places within a Children's Centre catchment area which shows an overall surplus.

6.4 Perceived, actual and potential gaps in Early Education Places

Although there appears to be sufficient available NEG places throughout Bath and North East Somerset, these places may not be in the 'required' location leading to some localised shortages and surpluses of places.

Any local shortage or surplus of places is exacerbated by

- parents having a preference about which setting their child attends,
- some parents not wanting their child to attend more than one setting,
- some parents taking their children to a setting near their work as opposed to near their home,
- some parents not wishing to use the full 5 session entitlement, and
- some parents using provision across local authority boundaries.

As stated above when providers were asked about their vacancies for 3-4 year olds a mixed picture emerged: 16% always had vacancies, 39% usually had them, 33% occasionally had them and 13% had them filled immediately.

Before the parental survey was returned, there was little or no evidence of parents being unable to use their full entitlement of 5 sessions. Even so, the varying state of the vacancies at the providers and the fact that some of parents surveyed were not able to access 5 sessions indicates that there may be a small but significant shortage of places in some areas.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Key findings of this report are summarised below but they must be considered alongside the following facts:

- estimates of the actual numbers of young children are just that – estimates,
- the number of children requiring childcare and the number of childcare places being provided is in a constant state of flux,
- even among those parents who do require childcare, the most popular form of childcare is family members, particularly grandparents, and friends. The accessibility, use and quality of this childcare is unknown but national and local surveys indicate that only the availability of this care allows some parents to return to work,
- the choice of childcare provider, similar to the choice of school, is a personal decision and there will always be some provision more popular than others,
- the local authority has a larger than national average number of private and voluntary providers over which it has limited influence.

The new statutory duty to manage the market to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that parental demand is matched to childcare supply is a challenging one. Parents are influenced by current and changing personal circumstances, preference for informal care and the relatively high cost of formal childcare making demand difficult to predict.

Summary of key findings

- a) Sufficiency of childcare to enable parents to take up, or remain in, work, or to undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

The majority of parents within the authority have access to sufficient childcare to enable them to work and/or train. This is often a mixture of different types of care and frequently involves contributions from family and friends.

The majority of providers of formal childcare (childminders, out of school settings, nurseries and pre-schools etc) think there is sufficient childcare in their immediate locality. Indeed, 21% of childminders and early education providers think there may be an 'over supply' of places which adversely effect their occupancy rates.

Nevertheless, a significant minority of providers think there are insufficient places in their locality, supporting parental claims of localised shortages.

Analysis of the supply of childcare places, along with expected demand, resulted in the conclusion that 'pockets' of shortages (and surpluses) can exist within areas showing overall sufficiency.

For this reason the market needs to continue to be managed at a 'micro' level: Development workers must work closely with childminders, local groups and schools to carefully ascertain demand before encouraging supply.

The high cost of childcare, afforded more easily by some than others, is an issue unlikely to be resolved in the near future. Remembering that provision must be sustainable, creative solutions are required in areas where there is only limited demand. Imaginative use of childminders and extended schools provision as well as sponsored places can resolve local shortages. Resources in areas of over supply may require some redirection.

The Family Information Service should continue their attempts to ensure that all parents are aware of the provision available in their local area.

b) Sufficiency of provision for the number of free entitlement places required for 3 and 4 year olds

Evidence suggests that all of the eligible children living in Bath and North East Somerset receive some 'free' Early Years education. Most four year olds attend the reception class in their local school and receive 10 sessions per week.

Some 3 year olds attend nursery classes at local schools for 5 sessions each week while the rest are funded to attend voluntary or private providers. At daycare settings and accredited childminders, these funded sessions are often combined with further hours of childcare.

Throughout the authority as a whole there is sufficient provision for all eligible children to attend for 5 sessions each week (if they so wish). Nevertheless the varying state of the provider vacancies, together with the fact that some of parents are unable to access 5 sessions, indicates that there may be small but significant shortfalls of places in some areas.

It is relatively easy to investigate the extent of the problem and it is recommended that every parent claiming less than 5 sessions is asked whether or not this is by choice. A Bath and North East Somerset led survey would thus further highlight areas in which more NEG places are required.

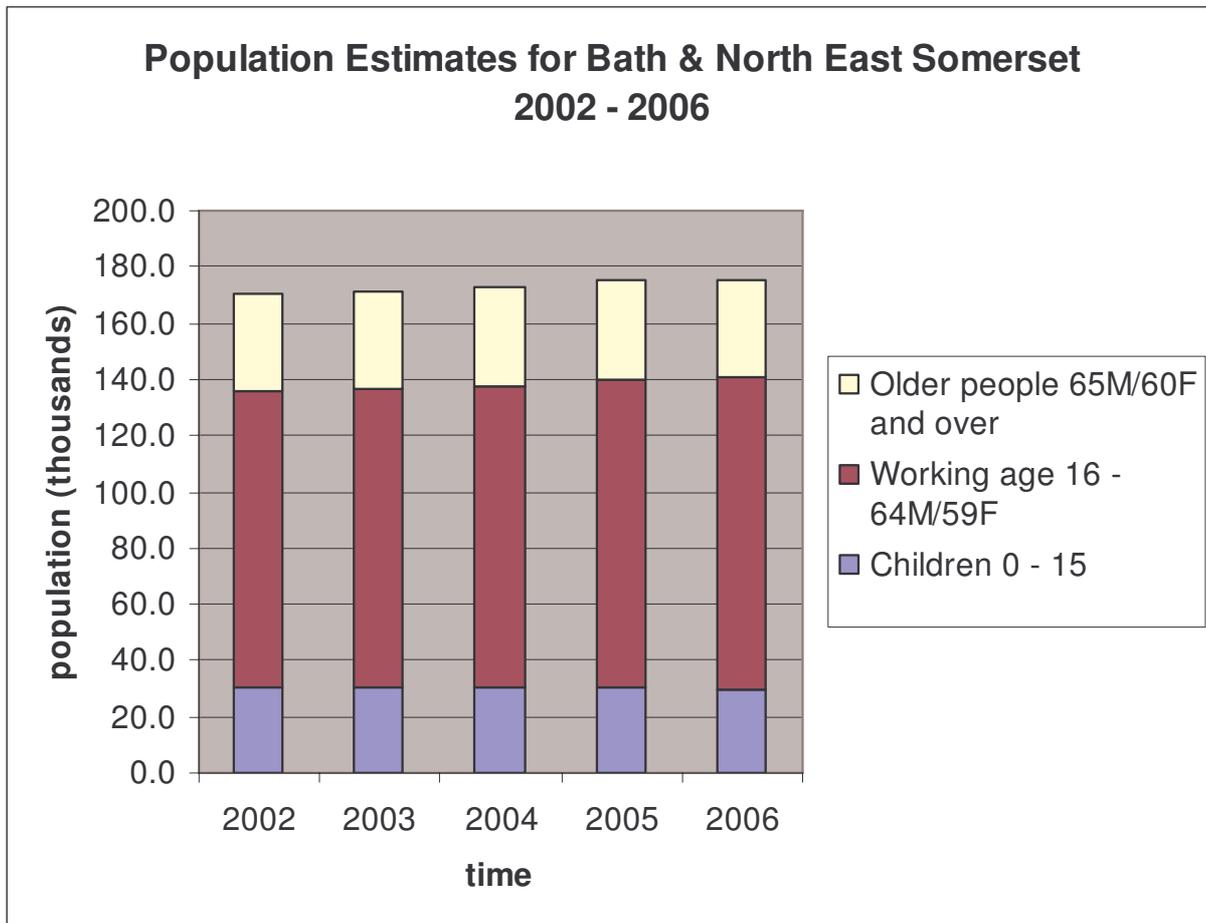
The difficulty of providing sufficient places is exacerbated by the fact that the value of the NEG grant is often less than the normal hourly rate charged by some providers. This is particularly relevant in areas where there is a shortage of childcare places for babies: If settings provide care to younger children at a higher rate, there is no incentive to offer more 'NEG' places for 3 & 4 year olds. If further investigation reveals real shortages in a particular area, the authority may have to consider subsidising NEG places either within established settings (including childminders) or by using commercial incentives to create new providers.

Finally it has to be noted that over the next few years the Government will be increasing the length of the free early education/care sessions for 3 & 4 year olds, as well as permitting more flexibility in their use. The increased offer may inadvertently result in a decrease in the number of places available: Some providers have time constraints which mean they are unable to operate for more than 5 hours and can therefore only accommodate one 3 hour session per day instead of two 2.5 hours sessions.

APPENDICES for Childcare Sufficiency Report

- 1 Number of Children Aged 0 to 15
- 2 Birth Rate
- 3 Childcare Places
- 4 Map – Childcare Provision
- 5 Map - Children’s Centre Target Areas
- 6 Consultation with Parents and Providers
- 7 Map - Home Postcodes of Parents Responding to Questionnaire
- 8 Hard to Reach Groups
- 9 Survey of Parents on the Link Register
- 10 Employer Consultation
- 11 Use of Formal Childcare
- 12 Map – Postcodes of Parents Claiming Unavailable Childcare

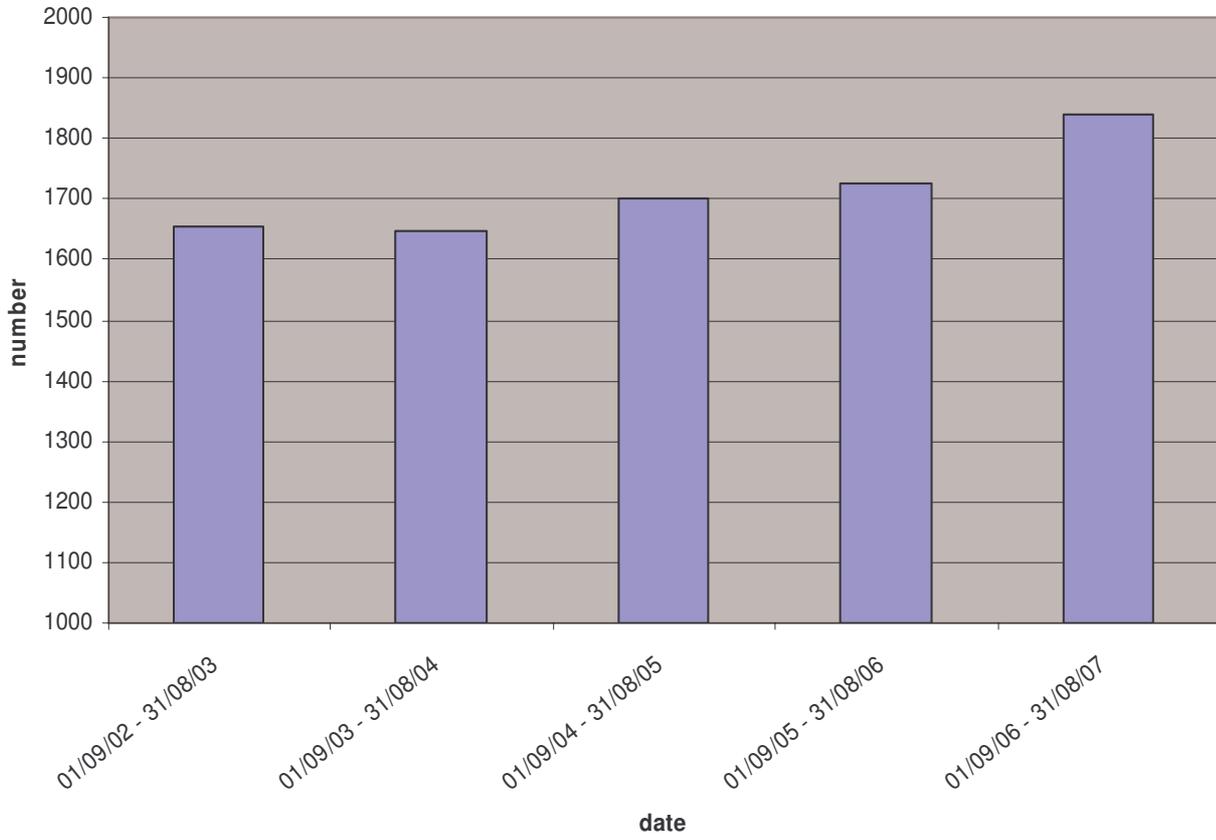
1 Number of Children Aged 0 to 15



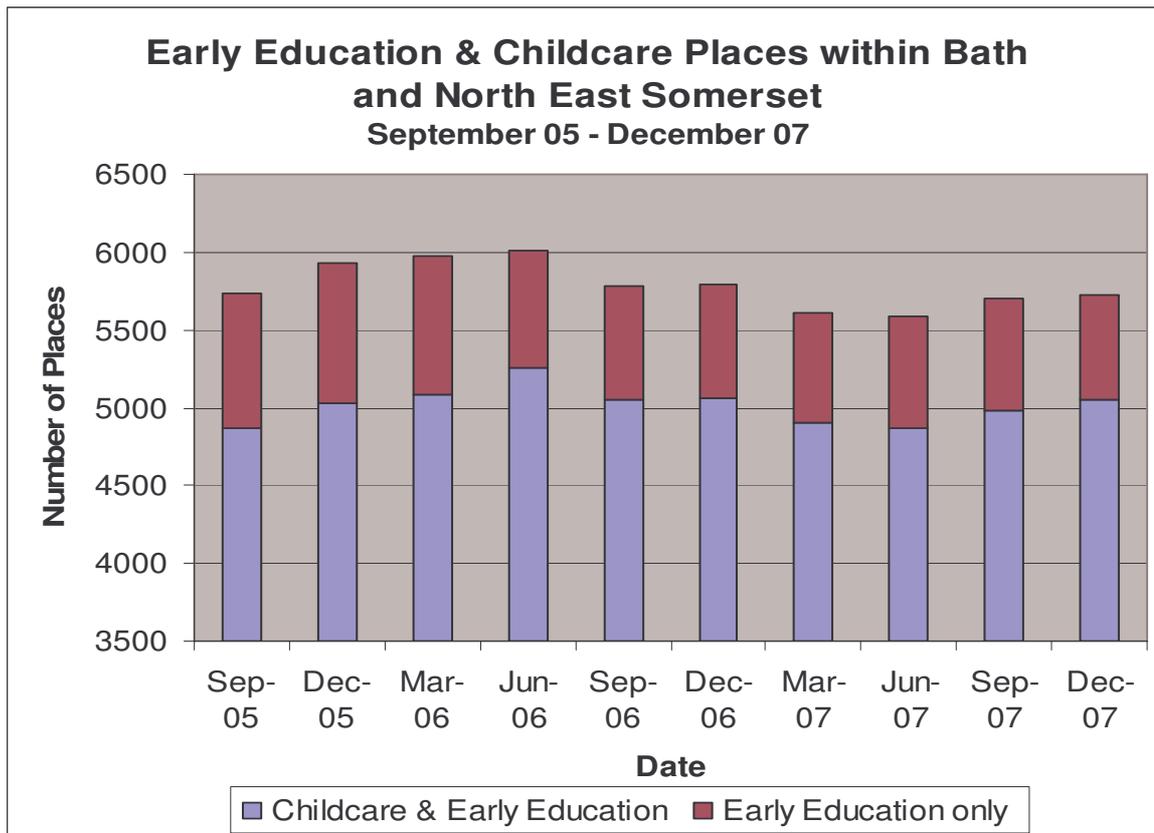
Source: Office for National Statistics.

2 Birth Rate

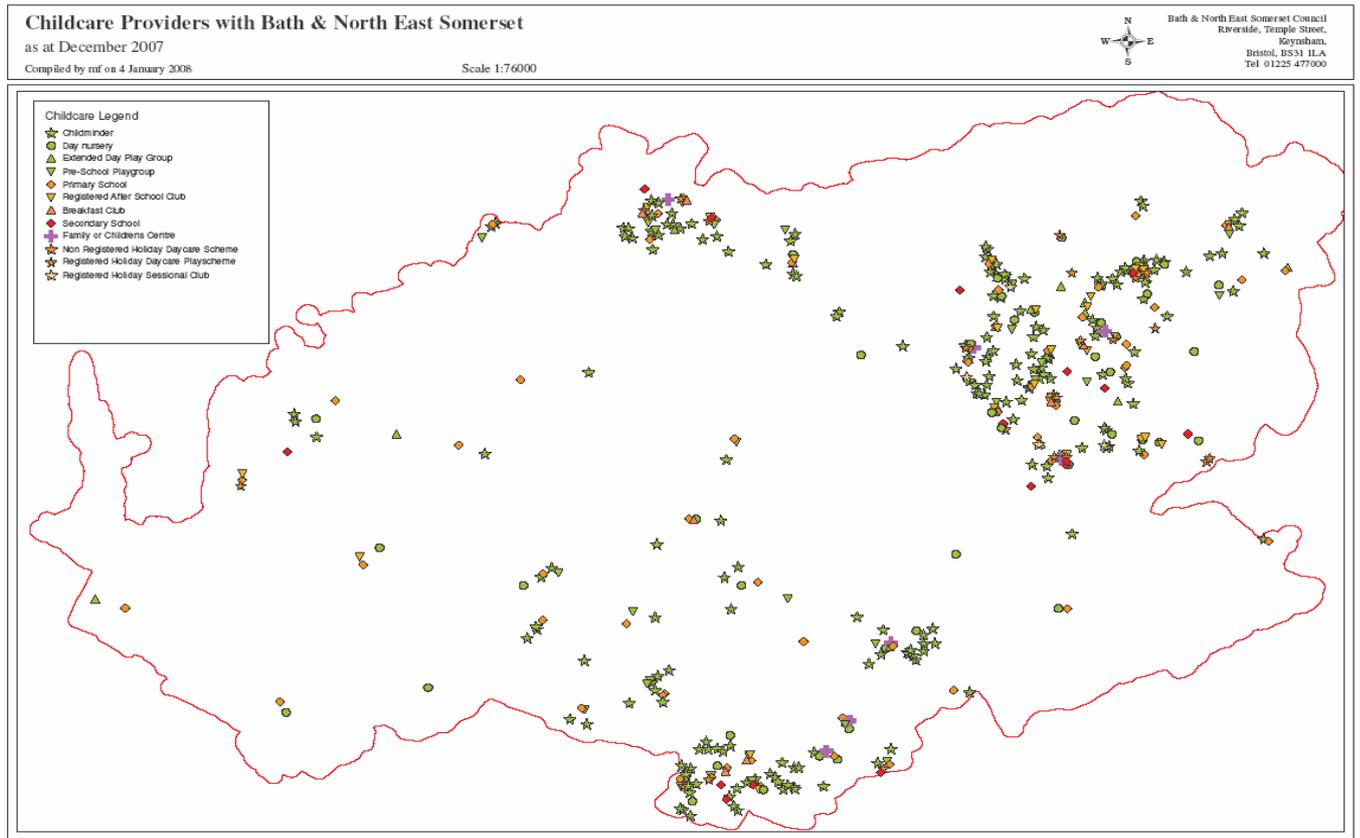
Number of children born within B&NES for each academic year Sep 02 to Aug 07
Source B&NES PCT



3 Childcare Places



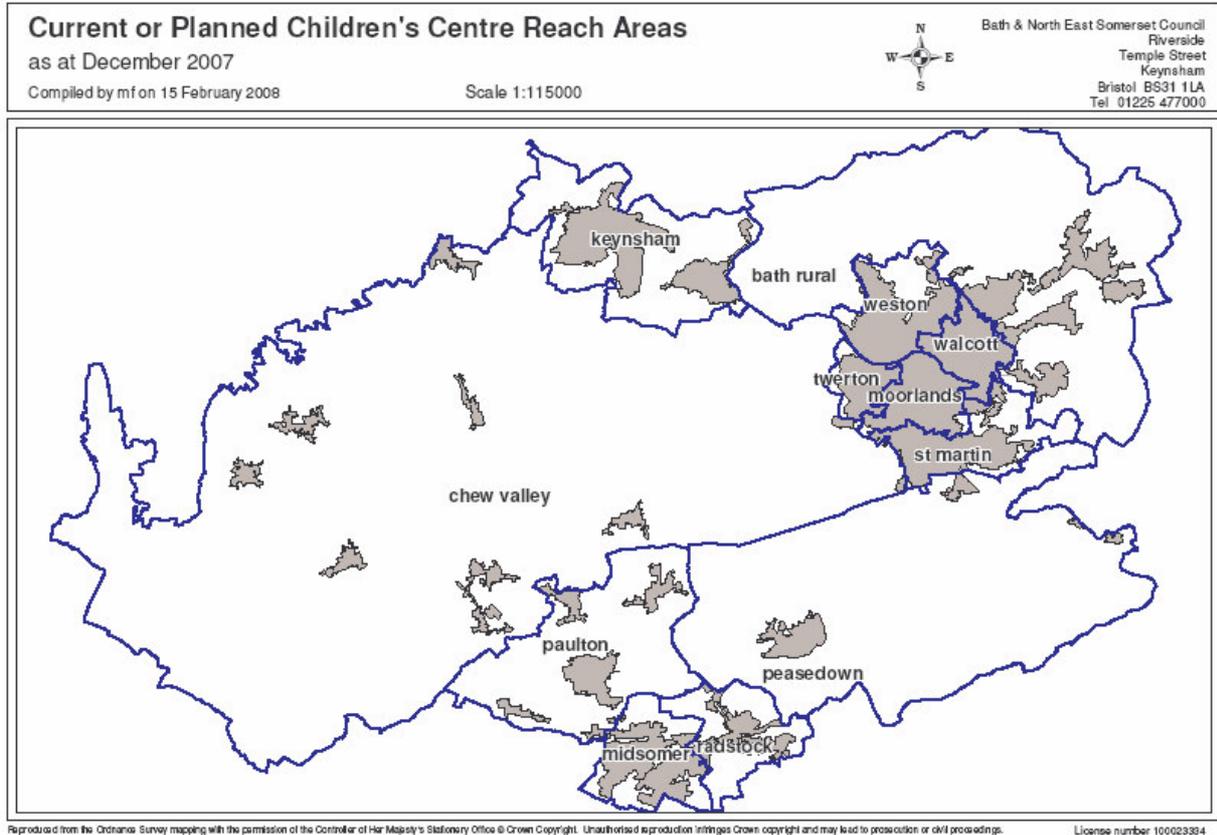
4 Map – Childcare Provision



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5 Map – Children’s Centre Target Areas



6 Consultation with Parents and Providers

The opinions of parents with children aged 0-14 and from the providers of childcare within Bath and North East Somerset were collected by sending out 'parent' and 'provider' questionnaires respectively.

The Education Management System was used to randomly select 1500 school age children (in Reception to Year 9). Their parents were then sent a questionnaire to their home address. A pre paid envelope was provided with a covering letter. To gain the views of parents of pre-school children, 20 copies of the 'parental' questionnaire were sent to 16 childcare providers (Day Nurseries, Pre-School Playgroups, Nursery Units of Private Schools) for them to distribute to parents to return directly to the council. These pre-schools were selected to ensure a good geographical spread. In addition, for parents in the 'hard to reach' groups, questionnaires were completed with the help of a support worker – see section 8.

The 'provider' questionnaire was sent to all childcare / early education providers within the authority: Childminders, Day Nurseries, Maintained Nurseries, Pre-school playgroups, Nursery Units of Private schools, Breakfast clubs, After School and Holiday Clubs.

A copy of the questionnaire sent to parents follows overleaf.

Response

708 replies representing 1355 children (of whom 28 were disabled, 30 had a statement of SEN) were returned.

Age of children:

0 – 2 years 147
3 – 4 years 142
5 – 11 years 562
11-17 years 504

85 male carer respondents (73 from 2 parent families, 12 single dads)
623 female carer respondents

501 2 parent families
200 single parents
7 'other' families

Respondent works	All	Single parent	2 parent	other
Full time	178	46	129	3
Part time > 16	242	70	169	3
Part time < 16	108	18	89	1
Full time parent	130	37	93	
Training/studying	21	9	12	
Looking for work	29	20	9	



DO YOU THINK THERE IS ENOUGH CHILDCARE IN YOUR AREA?

Background

The local authority has a new duty, under the Childcare Act, to ensure there is enough childcare available to parents/carers who need it if they wish to go out to work. As a council we must find out how many parents/carers would like to go to work but cannot do so because there is no-one to look after their children. In addition we need to know if parents, carers and children are satisfied with their current childcare arrangements.

By completing this questionnaire you will tell us whether you think there is enough childcare available. Where we discover that a number of parents/carers are prevented from going to work because of a lack of facilities, the council will support the start up of more childcare services in that neighbourhood.

Childcare is defined as 'anyone else looking after your children when they are not at school'. As well as formal care by day nurseries and childminders this may include family, friends and neighbours. For older children, not yet mature enough to be left unattended, supervised activities after school and during holiday times may enable a parent/carer to go out to work.

Confidentiality

All data on the completed questionnaires will be treated confidentially. Each questionnaire will be analysed and the results summarised by geographical area - individual responses will not be identified or passed to any other third party.

Free draw

As a thank you, all parents/carers who return a questionnaire can choose to enter a free draw for £100 of high street shopping vouchers. If you wish to be included in the draw please enter some contact details at the end of the questionnaire. These details will not be stored electronically or used for any other purpose. The draw will take place on 30th November 2007 and the winner notified shortly afterwards.

Please return the completed questionnaire, as soon as possible, in the enclosed Freepost envelope or to;

Parental Childcare Audit,
Early Years and Extended Services, KTH
FREEPOST SWB287
PO Box 25
Bristol
BS31 1FA

Thank you very much for your help.

Parental Demand For Childcare

Q1 How many children live with you?.....

	Age 0 - 2 years	Age 3 - 4 years (pre-school)	Age 5 - 11 (primary)	Age 11 - 17 (secondary)
How old are they?..... <i>Enter the number of children within each age group</i>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
Disabled?..... <i>Enter the number of these who are considered disabled</i>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
SEN Statement?..... <i>Enter the number with a statement of Special Educational Need</i>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>

Q2 Are you (please tick one)
Male?..... Female?.....

Q3 Is your family a (please tick one)
Two parent family?..... Single parent family?..... Other?.....

Q4 Do you work (outside the home?) (please tick one)

yes - Full time.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	no - Full time parent.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
yes - Part time more than 16 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/>	no - Training/Studying.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
yes - Part time less than 16 hours per week.	<input type="checkbox"/>	no - Looking for work.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q5 If a 2 parent family: Does your partner work (outside the home?) (please tick one)

yes - Full time.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	no - Full time parent.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
yes - Part time more than 16 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/>	no - Training/Studying.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
yes - Part time less than 16 hours per week.	<input type="checkbox"/>	no - Looking for work.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6 Do you currently RELY on any of the following childcare provision for your children? (please tick what you use for each child)
RELY indicates regular use that you, as a parent/carer, would struggle to be without. Breakfast, After school and Holiday clubs are those that normally require payment and are registered with OFSTED, as opposed to 'football' and 'drama' clubs run as after school activities at the school.

	Age 0 - 2	Age 3 - 4 (pre-school)	Age 5 - 11 (primary)	Age 11 - 17 (secondary)
Crèche.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childminder.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nanny / Au pair.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preschool, Playgroup, School Nursery....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervised activities after school on..... school site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breakfast club.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After school club.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holiday Club/Activities/Sports.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family members.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends and neighbours.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None - do not use childcare..... <i>If you do not use ANY childcare for ANY children ▶▶▶ go straight to Q10</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 What is the MAIN reason for using the childcare? (please tick one)
To allow me to work, train or study To allow my child to socialise and play

Q8 When do you need this childcare? *(please tick)*
 Term time only?..... School holidays only?..... All year round?.....

Q9 If PAYING for formal childcare, how satisfied are you with your current childcare? Please score each service you use. Enter a mark for each aspect of your provider - put 1 for poor, 2 for satisfactory, 3 for good, 4 for excellent.

	Location	Opening Hours	Cost / fees	Staff / Carer	Reliability
Crèche.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Childminder.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Nanny / Au pair.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Preschool, Playgroup, School Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Supervised activities after school on school site.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Breakfast club.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
After school club.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Holiday Club/Activities/Sports.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Any comments?

Q10 Why do you NOT use childcare for some of your children? *(tick all that apply)*

	Age 0 - 2	Age 3 - 4	Age 5 - 11 (primary)	Age 11 - 17 (secondary)
Prefer to look after children myself.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No suitable childcare available:				
Too expensive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opening hours not suitable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of transport – access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language / cultural reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child needs additional support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tried it but child didn't like it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No childcare available at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I work around school hours.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child doesn't need it - too old.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I use childcare for all my children.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Any comments?

Q11 In the last year, have childcare issues prevented you (or your partner) from STARTING or CONTINUING in work/training? *(please tick one)*
 No..... Yes.....
 *If Yes – please briefly describe the problem

Q12 Are you aware of the following? If so, have you used/qualified for any of them in the last year? (please tick whether you have heard of them and, if so, whether you have used or qualified for them)

	Aware of	Used/ qualified
Child tax credit.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working Families Tax Credit.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nursery Education Grant.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Information Services.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's Centres.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Care to Learn.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q13 (Only for those with 3 - 4 year olds.) Nursery Education Grant helps pay for pre-school education for children over the age of 3 – it is paid directly to the pre-school on behalf of your child. The local authority provides grants for 5 sessions of nursery education per week. Does your child attend for 5 sessions per week? (please tick one)

Yes..... If No - why? Can't get more sessions If No - why? Don't want more sessions

Q14 Is your total household income (please tick one)
 Less than £20,000 per year..... More than £20,000 per year.....

Q15 What is your ethnic group? (please tick one)
 White..... Black or Black British..... Prefer not to say.....
 Mixed..... Chinese.....
 Asian or Asian British... Other.....

Q16 Do you consider yourself disabled? (please tick one)
 Yes..... No.....

Q17 If a 2 parent family: Is your partner disabled? (please tick one)
 Yes..... No.....

Q18 What is your postcode?.....
 e.g. BA1 4GA

Q19 If you have you any other comments please write them here:

Q20 Name and contact telephone number for entry into free draw

Thank you for your help.
 Please return your questionnaire in the FREEPOST envelope.

The Provider questionnaire varied slightly to reflect the type of provider. In the following questionnaire, only those providers with funded Nursery Education (NEG) places - including the accredited childminders - were asked the questions relating to NEG funding. These were omitted from other providers.

The questions about registered places and vacancies were also modified to reflect the appropriate age groups;

Childminders were asked about age groups:

- Under 1
- 1 to 4
- 5 to 8

Full daycare providers were asked about age groups:

- Under 2
- 2 to 3
- 3 to 4
- 5 to 8

Sessional care providers were asked about age groups:

- 2 to 3
- 3 to 4

Out of School providers were asked about age groups:

- 5 to 8
- Over 8's

In addition, breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday clubs were asked an additional question:

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	not sure
Parents appear to want 'Out of School' childcare but are loathe to pay for it	<input type="checkbox"/>				



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Bath and North East Somerset Childcare Survey 2007 - Providers Questionnaire

Please check that the following information is correct. If any details are incorrect please amend as appropriate.

Setting Name and Address

Contact Name and Address

We are interested in YOUR views as to whether or not there are enough childcare places in the local area around your setting.

Please read the following statements and, for each one, indicate how much you agree or disagree by putting one tick in the relevant box.

	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>not sure</i>
There is sufficient childcare provision locally to meet the needs of parents/carers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
My setting has the opportunity to be well represented in the local planning for Children's Centres	<input type="checkbox"/>				
There are too many NEG funded places locally and I am concerned about my occupancy rates	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The development of childcare places is successful in taking account of existing provision	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I am confident that my setting is sustainable over the next 1 to 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Where late or non-payment of fees has occurred we are able to implement strategies to resolve these effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The 50% advance payment for NEG is enough to ensure good cashflow	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The current NEG funding of £8.32 per session is sufficient to ensure sustainability of my setting	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Continued overleaf ----->

Please answer the following questions.

a) Setting's **Ofsted Registered number** of places in each age range
 Not all settings are sufficiently staffed to operate at the registered capacity. The working capacity is the maximum number of children you can accommodate at any one time given your current staffing levels.

Age Range			
Under 2	2 to 3	3 to 4	5 to 8
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

b) Setting's **Working** capacity in each age range

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

c) Do you currently have any vacancies? Please circle

YES / NO

d) If yes, please insert the **number** of vacancies for each age range THIS week:

Age Range			
Under 2	2 to 3	3 to 4	5 to 8

Monday

am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm
<input type="text"/>							

Tuesday

<input type="text"/>							
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Wednesday

<input type="text"/>							
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Thursday

<input type="text"/>							
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Friday

<input type="text"/>							
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

e) How would you best describe vacancies for each age range at your setting? Please tick one box per age group.

Age Range			
Under 2	2 to 3	3 to 4	5 to 8

We always have vacancies

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

We usually have vacancies

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

We occasionally have vacancies

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Any vacancies are filled immediately

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

f) Do you maintain a waiting list? Please circle

YES / NO

g) If yes, please insert the number of children in each age group who are waiting for a place at the moment.

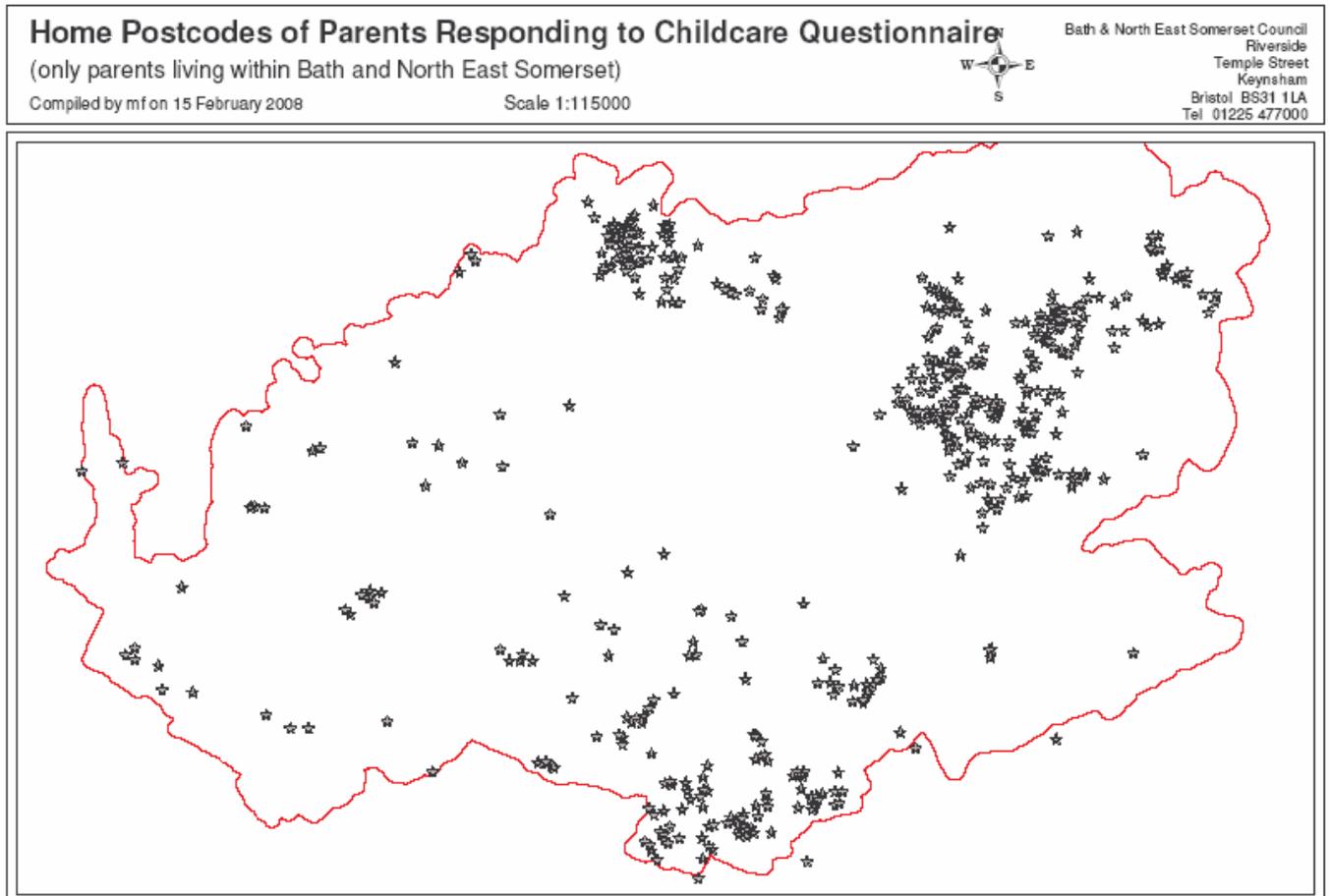
Age Range			
Under 2	2 to 3	3 to 4	5 to 8

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

h) Any other comments?

Thank you for completing the form. Please return it, **by November 1st**, in the enclosed FREEPOST envelope or to:
 Childcare Sufficiency Audit, Early Years Childcare and Play Team, 2nd floor, KTH, Keynsham, BS31 1ED.

7 Map – Home Postcodes of Parents Responding to Questionnaire



8 Hard to Reach Groups

Asian, Chinese, and Friends group (BEACH)
At risk of offending
At risk of re-offending
Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Black and OME Mental Health
Black families education group
Leaving care
Looked After
Low income families
Not engaged in training
Parents in residential care
Polish community
Rural groups
Self harmers
Substance misuse
Teenage parents
Unemployed

9 Survey of Parents on the Link Register

In 2005/06 Bath & North East Somerset undertook work to develop a Pathway for disabled children. One of the outcomes from this work was that families and professionals said there was need for improvement to the amount, level and type of practical support available for families.

The Disabled Children Steering Group agreed to consult with parents and carers to establish what new services were needed and what services needed to improve.

In April 2007, a questionnaire was sent out asking parents/ carers to rank various issues in order of importance (1-6). A pre paid envelope was provided with a covering letter.

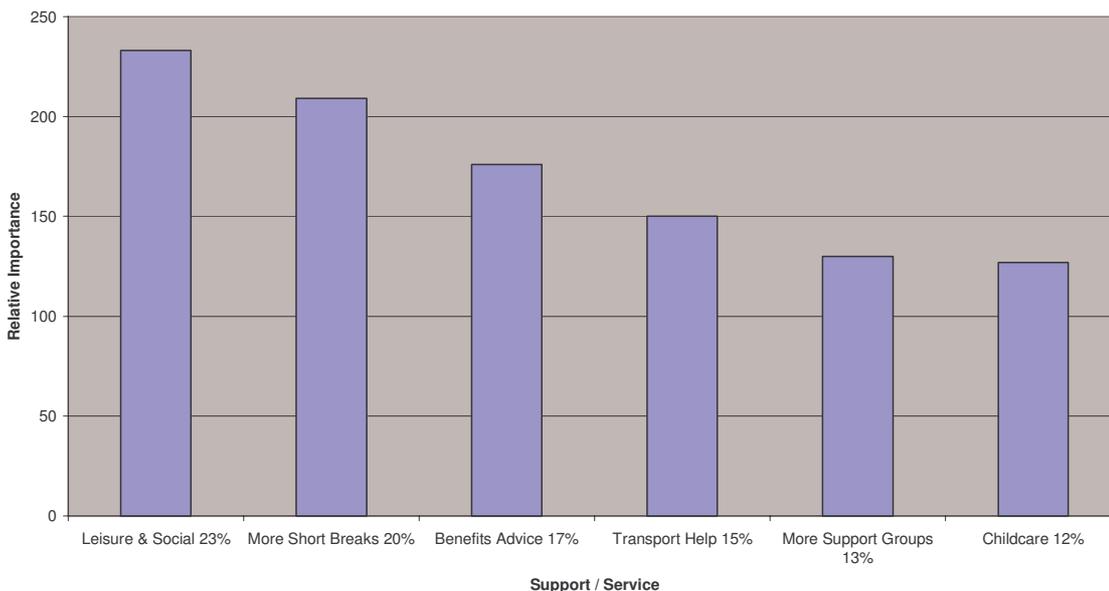
A total of 168 questionnaires were sent out to families who are voluntarily on the Special Needs Link Register held by Bath and North East Somerset Housing and Social Services.

50 questionnaires were returned. (Approx 30 %)

Results:

Most priority: Leisure and Social
More short breaks
Benefits advice
Transport help
More support groups
Least priority: Childcare

Priorities for Parents of Disabled Children



10 Employer Consultation

The sufficiency assessment was promoted through Bath Chamber of Commerce through their August newsletter, web pages on the Business West website and in the business section of the Bath Chronicle. The following was promoted as an opportunity to comment: -

Business West website:

“Childcare Survey: Bath and North East Somerset Council wants to hear from employers with views on the provision of childcare facilities, particularly where their lack prevents people from getting a job or taking training courses in preparation for employment. Please send comments to info@bathchamber.co.uk heading it “Childcare sufficiency” or contact Philip Frankland, Strategic Planning and Performance Manager, Early Years and Extended Services, for Bath and North East Somerset direct on Telephone 01225 394330. E-mail philip_frankland@bathnes.gov.uk”

Bath Chronicle:

Bath Chamber of Commerce is encouraging members to contribute their views to an assessment of the availability of childcare provision in the area.

President, Theresa McDermott, says this is an important subject to highlight because it has huge implications for both employers and parents: “Businesses often rely heavily on workers who have responsibility for looking after children, so adequate arrangements for childcare can make the difference between success and failure. Larger businesses are more likely to be able to assist with care facilities but many of our members run small or medium size companies without the same resources.”

The 2006 Childcare Act says local authorities must do their best to make sure there is enough childcare to meet the needs of parents who want to work or undertake education or training leading to work. So the Council is carrying out an assessment of existing services which is intended to identify gaps and allow them to establish plans to meet any needs that arise.

Employers are being asked to take an active part in the assessment and contribute their views, which will be taken into account by the Council. The process is bound to be of particular interest to businesses involved in the leisure and tourism industries, many of whom employ significant number of part time workers who fit their employment around the demands of looking after their children.

Childcare is just one of the issues affecting working parents. Councils are also keen to learn more about the take-up of tax credits and whether adopting more flexible working patterns could help businesses with recruitment, retention and motivation.

Meanwhile European “Work/Life Balance” regulations allow parents with children under the age of six, or up to eighteen in the case of disabled youngsters, to apply for a flexible working pattern. Most employers are sympathetic to those requests, but

the availability of high quality childcare facilities would take the pressure of both parents and employers.

If you would like the Executive of the Chamber to put your views forward please email: info@bathchamber.co.uk heading it "Childcare sufficiency" or contact Philip Frankland, Strategic Planning and Performance Manager, Early Years and Extended Services, for Bath and North East Somerset direct on Telephone 01225 394330. E-mail philip Frankland@bathnes.gov.uk

Unfortunately no responses were forthcoming through this exercise at the time of publication of this report.

11 Use of Formal Childcare

Note – paid childcare includes childminder, nanny/au pair, preschool, playgroup, nursery, supervised activities after school, breakfast club, after school club, holiday club. This does not include crèche, family and friends/neighbours.

Percentage of all children using paid childcare by family income

	Annual gross income for family		
	Less than £20,000	More than £20, 000	All incomes
Age of child			
0-2	30%	53%	45%
3-4	62%	79%	73%
5-11	27%	34%	31%
11-17	7%	13%	11%
All ages	33%	44%	40%

Figures are for families using family/friends for any childcare i.e. these figures are not exclusive and families may also be using formal (paid) childcare as defined above for some of their childcare.

Percentage of all children using informal childcare by income

	Annual gross income for family		
	Less than £20,000	More than £20, 000	All incomes
Age of child			
0-2	36%	36%	36%
3-4	34%	36%	35%
5-11	44%	52%	49%
11-17	30%	31%	30%
All ages	41%	47%	45%

The difference in use of informal childcare between 2-parent and single parent families can be shown as follows. Figures are only shown as an average for all ages of children.

Type of family	Annual gross income for family		
	Less than £20,000	More than £20, 000	All incomes
2-parent	31%	46%	43%
Single parent	46%	53%	47%

The effect of working status on some use informal childcare for the different types of family can be shown as follows:

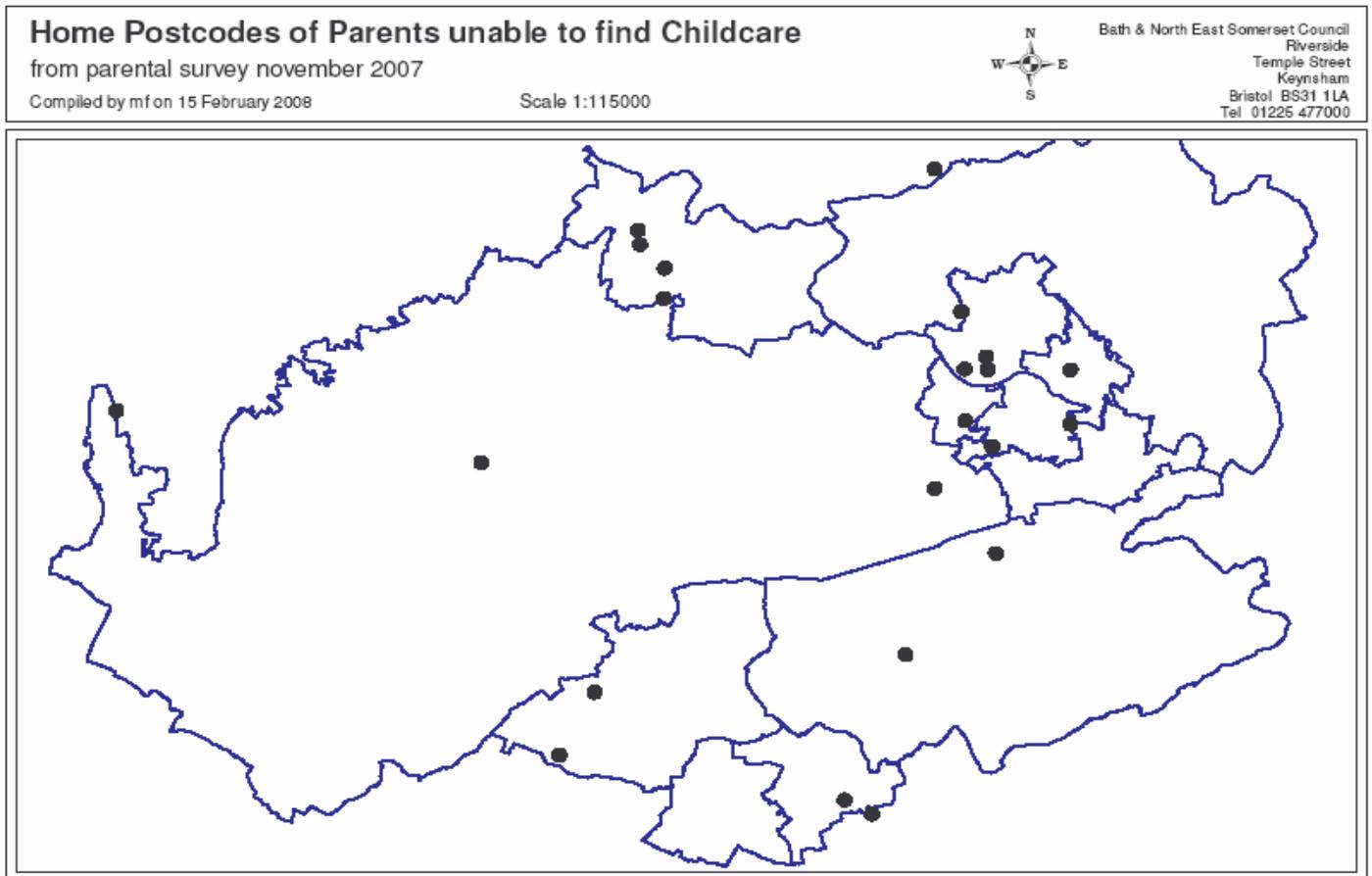
Type of family	Working status	Annual gross income for family		
		< £20,000	> £20, 000	All incomes
2-parent – both parents working	Full or part time or training	46%	53%	52%
	Full time or >16 hours	24% ¹	55%	53%
Single parent	Full or part time or training	56%	53%	55%
	Full time or >16 hours	46%	53%	52%

¹ The figure was taken from a small sample (5 out of 24 families where both parents worked at least 16 hours and the income was less than £20K per annum)

Comparing 2-parent and single parent families' use of formal childcare:

	Annual gross income for family		
	Less than £20,000	More than £20, 000	All incomes
All family types	33%	44%	40%
2-parent families	41%		
Single parents	38%		

12 Map – Postcodes of Parents Claiming Unavailable Childcare



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